The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

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Donald G. Miller:
The Meaning of Christmas

John R. Bodo • Is Your Bible Open?

Browne Barr • Standing on the Promises

Ernest R. Case • The Charm of Christmas

Voices of a World in Revolution

A Choral Poem by Phillip N. Linsell

FINLEY EVERSOLE

ART IN THE PULPIT

VOL. XXXI, No. 12 DECEMBER 1960

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PULPIT POST

Thither, Homiletics!

SIR: George C. Stuart, in an article entitled "Whither Homiletics?" (July) makes some charges against homileticians which I feel must not go unchallenged. The essence of my remarks could well be summed up in what may be called "my own gospel." This phrase, used so capably by Phillips Brooks in his 1871 Yale *Lectures on Preaching,* means essentially that any minister must by the tugging of his own bootstraps pull *himself* across the chasm which separates theology and the pew. Contrariwise, we have too long been content to blame the seminary for our own lack as ministers. We have been too content to feel that we should have been issued from our seminary "completely man, completely God."

Dr. Stuart mentions a textbook by John A. Broadus as one widely used. This is a classic and every minister ought to be aware of it but it is not the only textbook, nor the chief one in use in many seminary classrooms. Three standard works are those by Dr. Robert White Kirkpatrick of Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia; by Dr. Dwight E. Stevenson of The College of the Bible, Lexington, Kentucky (in collaboration with Dr. C. F. Diehl of the University of Kentucky); and a very fine work by Dr. Ilion T. Jones of San Francisco Theological Seminary. All of these challenge Dr. Stuart's thesis that the "homileticians" are not bridging the gap.

It is simply unfair to those who are doing such a scholarly work in homiletics to generalize that "A serious lack of systematic work in homiletics is everywhere evident in theological education today." It would be more correct to say that some contemporary theological educators are prone to regard homiletics with disdain and thereby to relegate it to a "correct speech course." But it is *not correct* to say that "A serious lack of systematic work in homiletics is everywhere evident in theological education today."

William Ira Kerr
First Christian Church
Newton Falls, Ohio

The Pulpit

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What Does It Do?

SEEING something never seen before, a little child is likely to ask, not "What is it?" but "What does it do?" This is the pragmatic question and about many things it is proper to ask, "What does it do?" There are, of course, many things that have meaning and value without doing anything. "A rose is a rose is a rose," said Gertrude Stein. Yes, a rose *is* and we do not require of it that it *do* anything.

But this is not true of the church. We must ask of the church "What does it do?" Indeed, the only way to find out what the church is, is to ask what the church does. We must compare the church, not with a rose, which has value whether or not it has activity, but with those things which have a minimum of form and a maximum of function. The church, we might say, is like a storm, or music, or light. Like these it exists only so long as it is animated, only so long as energy is spent. H. Grady Davis said, "There is no such thing as love; there are only people who love." A similar word could be spoken about the church. There is no such *thing*.

Indeed, a static church is not a church; a church at rest is not a church. The church must do or die; it is doing or it is already dead. Some things have a maximum of form and a minimum of function: a mountain, for example. Others have a minimum of form and a maximum of function: steam, for example. The church is in this second category. Walter J. Harrelson has put this thought in terms of relationship. He said, "The New Testament depicts the church through the use of forceful and graphic images. Each of these specifies a particular relationship between two or more realities: God and his people, Christ and his body, the Body and its members, the community and the Holy Spirit, the vine and the branches, the disciple and his Master, the servant and his Lord."

It follows that one of the tragedies of the church is that it is always succumbing to the temptation to minimize function and magnify form. Function seems so fleeting; form seems so permanent. Function seems so vague; form seems so real and solid. So we yield to the lure of structure; we lose ourselves in the flurry of activities dedicated to the preservation and development of structure — the boards, committees, programs, campaigns, meetings, suppers, which have the form of the church as their ultimate end; and we neglect, sometimes sacrifice, the substance of the church, the being and doing which have as their ultimate end God's love and redemption revealed, God's will declared, God's people united, God's Son adored, trusted and obeyed, God's world becoming God's kingdom.

Take, as an illustration, the classic definition that the church is the church where the sacraments are administered. Has the Lord's Supper become for us merely the repetition of an ancient rite, the nostalgic, sometimes poignant, celebration of a beautiful bit of pageantry? Do we "show the Lord's death till he come" only symbolically? Or are we who are the church those for whom the cup of blessing which we bless and the bread which we break are a *participation* in the shed blood and the broken body of our Christ? Do we show forth in deed as well as in symbol the sacrifice of our Lord? "I would know him," said Paul, "and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering, with my nature transformed to die as he died, to see if I too can attain the resurrection from the dead." We shall not die as he died, but in fuller measure we can share "the fellowship of his suffering"; and if this is not a part of what we do as a church, we serve his table hypocritically. We know him, as did the men on the way to Emmaus, not in the recitation of his story or in the exploration of the scriptures, but in the breaking of bread. And even then not in the ceremonial act but in the life which feeds on him and dies for him. Men know Christ, as Schweitzer rightly discerned, "in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in his fellowship." There is a certain mystical sense in which Thomas was right after all; unless we see the wound in his side, unless we see the nail-prints in his hands, we do not know him. We must, as Luther put it, "Begin from the wounds of Christ."

As with the sacraments so with the preaching of the Word, the edification of the fellowship, the mission of the church as the conscience of the world. Activity must not be substituted for action; organization must not stifle zeal; structure must not obscure substance. We must ask of the church, "What does it do?" KYLE HASELDEN

The Meaning of Christmas

By Donald G. Miller

Now when Jesus was born. . . . Matthew 2:1

WHAT is the meaning of Christmas? Santa Claus, tinsel, greeting cards, parties, toys, trips, colored lights on trees — are these the meaning of Christmas? Sad to say, they are for many. But these are not the real meaning of Christmas. They are merely its accompaniments. For one can have all these things, and still miss the meaning of Christmas. On the other hand, one may be deprived of all these and yet enter into the depths of Christmas joy.

Christmas means angel songs, wise men, shepherds, a star, and a babe. "Sentimentalism," someone cries in answer. How dare we talk about a star when the thick clouds of world tragedy have blotted it out? How dare we speak of angel voices when the rumble of hate's hurricane is sounding in our ears? How can we talk about wise men when the world has gone mad? What do peaceful shepherds mean when countless thousands of our fellowmen are treated like sheep torn limb from limb by lions and wolves? To talk about the meaning of Christmas in a world like this is no light matter. Perhaps we do well to ask ourselves what Tennyson asked at a particularly tragic Christmas season for him:

> With such compelling cause to grieve
> How dare we keep our Christmas-eve?

There are those who would cynically deny us the right to speak of Christmas now. They would say with scorn that one good look at our world proves it all to be unreal. Of what value is a beautiful story? Lovely stories beat their heads to death on the hard walls of life. Stars, and singing angels, and worshiping wise men, and adoring shepherds are all "old sisters of a day gone by." They have had their day and ceased to be. They are nothing now but empty sentiment. And the hard reality which glares at us now leaves no place for sentimentalism. At best Christmas can have value only as we make a one-day truce with reality and dream ourselves into an unreal world of fancy, only to be rudely awakened the day after Christmas.

But if we cannot speak about Christmas, we must be silent about any values. If we cannot declare our Christian hope in the midst of a world filled with dread and potential self-annihilation, we are but dumb brutes who must stand forever speechless before the abyss of total despair.

Sentiment? Listen to a story told to me by a friend. He avowed that the most meaningful Christmas he ever had was one on which he knew nothing but tragedy. He had none of the things which normally accompany Christmas. He was lying, severely wounded, in a German hospital, following the Battle of the Bulge. One of his eyes was gone forever. His medical care was inadequate. His surroundings were ugly. He did not know but that the German break-through meant doom for the allied cause. His yearning for loved ones was mocked by their absence. His companion in the next cot was a German soldier who had tormented him by kicking at his wounded eye as they rode on the floor of a crude ambulance en route to the hospital. Everything was homesickness, heartsickness, foreboding for the future, agonizing loneliness, surging hatred, yawning despair.

But into that crude shelter came a small group singing Joseph Mohr's "Silent Night! Holy Night!" In simple loveliness, as we all know, this carol gathers up the many facets of the Christmas story. The holy infant, the angel hosts, the wondrous star, the shepherds, are all there. Mere sentiment? Out went my friend's hand across to the next cot to grasp the hand of the German soldier who had kicked his wounded eye. Hatred disappeared. Loneliness was transformed by the strange presence of the unseen Savior. Loved ones, though at a distance, belonged to him in a new way. Foreboding for the future gave way to bright promise which he could not quite understand. Sentiment?

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No, sentiment can never transform such ugly realities in this way. This is not sentimentalism. This s redemption!

What lies deep at the heart of Christmas which nakes such transformations possible? Stripped of ıll sentiment, what are the solid realities of which Christmas reminds us?

I

In the first place, Christmas comes again to remind us of the pre-eminence of God. "And you, O Bethlehem . . . from you shall come a ruler." What this world needs is a ruler to bring order out of our chaos. And the only ruler who can do that is God. We have tried enough other rulers to know beyond the shadow of a doubt that no merely human ruler can control the vast forces which surge through humanity. Our paradox is that we, at one and the same time, need a ruler, and yet we need deliverance from the tyranny of human rulers. We need a ruler to save us, but human saviors destroy us. Our only hope is that God should become supreme in life, and rule all men by the might of his benevolent love.

Many years ago, on Dr. John Kelman's journey from Scotland to take the pastorate of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City, he visited frequently and at length with Dr. Matthew D. Mann, the famous surgeon who had made a valiant effort to save President McKinley's life after he had been wounded by an assassin's bullet. The surgeon, a reticent man, found it hard to speak openly of his Christian faith. But one night as they stood together on the deck, he said to Dr. Kelman: "I will tell you what we need. We need an emperor. The world needs an emperor." "An emperor for our democratic world?" Kelman asked. "Yes," answered Mann, "an emperor! And I will tell you his name: his name is Jesus Christ. There is no hope until we make him emperor." Dr. Mann was expressing what the early Christians knew. In a day of almost universal peace under Roman emperors, they saw that it was a crumbling peace which could not last. They knew that there was One who was Lord and Emperor, the crucified and risen and ascended Jesus Christ. And to him alone they gave their allegiance and sought to bring the whole world to his feet. For they saw clearly that only in his emperorship was there any final hope for the world.

Christmas comes again to remind us of the necessity of enthroning Christ as Lord of life. It tells us that God must be supreme or men cannot really live. We have tried to rewrite the angels' song, but in so doing it has lost its music. They sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men . . ." We have been in a hurry. We have had no time for long numbers. We have had to snatch our music as we ran. So we have shortened the angels' song. We have cut it in two, and have sung only part of it. And then, besides our haste, we have been practical people. We have wanted a theology which touched the earth. We have wanted a religion which was not ethereal, but which spoke the language of the street and had the accent of the human struggle. Hence, we have shortened the angels' song and transposed it from an eternal major key into an earthly minor key, and have sung merely "peace on earth," omitting the "glory to God in the highest."

But alas, the song has lost its music. The melody is monotonous; the harmony is discordant; the song won't sing itself. We have tried to solve the human problem without solving man's relation to God. And it cannot be done. Men are created as children of God. If we will not live as children of a heavenly father, we cannot live as brothers to each other. We must put God at the center of life, or life will be off center. We must keep contact with the dynamo of God's love, or there will be no current of warmth and good will coursing through the tangled wires of human relationships.

Christmas is here to remind us again that we must turn to God. We must refocus our gaze. We must readjust the lenses of our spiritual vision until we see the angels again. We must re-attune our spiritual ears until we can hear their song once more. And we must take up their song and sing it just as they sang it, without any revision or abbreviation or attempted improvements. We must sing "glory to God in the highest," and then we may sing, too, the refrain, "peace on earth." Christmas comes again to tell us unmistakably, and to urge upon us relentlessly, the old, old truth, that we must first look up to a higher world before we can look out on a better one.

II

Again Christmas reminds us that the God to whom we look is available if we seek him. It assures us that if we look toward him, he can be found. Matthew tells us that in Jesus was born one whose "name shall be called Emmanuel (which means, God with us)." That is the deep meaning of Christmas. "God with man is now residing."

> Veiled in flesh the God-head see;
> Hail th' Incarnate Deity,
> Pleased as man with man to dwell,
> Jesus, our Emmanuel.

The coming of God into human life was the answer to the agelong yearning on the part of man for a human quality in God which would bring him near to us.

This yearning was brought to a focus in the days when Jesus was born. The Roman Empire witnessed the breakup of earlier religious sanctions. With a strong sense of dependence, men knew they needed the help of the gods to give meaning to life. But the old gods were dead or dying. If only they could find other gods, unknown to them, but

whom they surmised to exist, they might find the help they needed. Yet the best they could do was to erect in Athens an altar "to an unknown god." But unknown gods were too remote from men. To have power in solving the human problem, the gods must be brought close to human need. Therefore in their yearning for a god in human form, men turned to the Roman emperor. Caesar Augustus brought new hope to the flagging spirits of men, and in his own person became the center of worship. Here was a god in human form, a god near to men, who they hoped could solve their problems.

III

The longing for a human quality in God, the desire that God should draw close to men in human form, was the outcome of the eternity which God has set in men's hearts. Men saw more and more clearly that human life was unbearable and meaningless without God. They had to get God back into life. This yearning was God-implanted. It was God's spirit striving with men in the ongoing events of history which brought man to a sense of the need for God to enter human life. But alas, man was not so ready to listen to God's answer to this sense of need. In the fullness of time, God sent his own Son into the world, in the likeness of man, and for man, to solve the human problem. But many chose to make an idol out of the emperor. Instead of accepting the fact that God had become man, they tried to turn a man into god. And through Roman emperor worship, temporary salvation of a political sort came for at least a part of the human race.

But the Christians steadfastly refused to bow to the lordship of any man exalted to the position of God. They profoundly believed, though, that in Jesus God had become man. They believed that the unseen, eternal God had entered time and taken his place at man's side in the human struggle. God was no longer merely the high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity, the One who had clothed himself with clouds and darkness. He was still that, but he was something more. He was the One who had drawn near to man; the One who had taken upon himself our nature; the One who was not ashamed to call us brethren; the One who identified himself with our suffering, our weakness, our sorrows, our death. In Jesus, God had come to dwell with man.

The devotees of Roman emperor worship sought to destroy the devotees of Christ. Two salvations were competing for the allegiance of men. Roman emperor worship enforced itself by the sword; but taking the sword, it perished by the sword. Its gods are now dead, slain by the very human power they deified. Christ worship sought to win the allegiance of men not by the sword, but by love. And in spite of enmity and opposition calculated to destroy him, still Jesus reigns, the one, Universal Lord — the God-man, the eternal God drawn near to us in time.

The salvation offered by deified Roman emperors was false. It could not meet the deep need of man. It could not set right the deep dislocation which man felt between himself and God. But the salvation brought by Jesus has stood the test of the generations. He never fails us. We only destroy ourselves when we refuse to accept his lordship.

For his lordship is "salvation." His name shall be called "Jesus," said the angel, "for he will save his people from their sins." "God with us" equals "salvation." The "good news of a great joy" is that God, in coming into human life in Christ, has set right the dislocation of our inner lives and made us whole. Jesus is the "still strong Man of the soul's need."

This is the meaning of Christmas. God is not against us. If he were, the contest between him and us would be too uneven and we would be destroyed. Nor is God *apart* from us, dwelling in some remote heaven, leaving us poor mortals to work out our broken destiny as best we may. If that were true, we would be undone, for we cannot master the problem of our own lives. But God is *with* us! The personal, creative, redemptive God is actually with us — the friend on our journey, the companion of our days. In Jesus, he has come into human life to unite himself with man. Following his death and resurrection, Jesus has returned in his Spirit to dwell with his people. And he has promised to be with us always, even unto the end of the age! Christmas means the fulfillment of that promise.

Thoughts on Preaching

✚ A FRIEND on the west coast suggests that the following five words should be eliminated from all articles and especially from all sermons: *confrontation, involvement, existentialism, dialogue, kerygma.* To that list can be added five more expendable words: *thrust, dimension, stance, depth, relevant.* Our sermons could profit from the pruning of such words.

✚ WE MUST all preach *to* our age, but woe to us if it is our age we preach, and only hold up the mirror to the time. — *P. T. Forsyth*

✚ THE DESIGN is the basic thing and . . . a good design without a manuscript is better than a complete manuscript without design. — *H. Grady Davis*

(From *Design for Preaching*, Muhlenberg, 1958)*

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* Used by permission.

Art in the Pulpit

By Finley Eversole

THE ALERT preacher today finds himself caught on the horns of a dilemma. He is called to preach in the midst of an *either/or* situation which is the product of recent theological and cultural developments. In the past forty years we have witnessed a critique of rational theology, moral idealism and a challenge to existential relevance effected by Kierkegaard, Barth, Bultmann, Niebuhr, Tillich and their disciples. What may be regarded in many ways as a common theological enterprise shared by these men has led to a parting of the ways at the point of interpreting the significance of culture for understanding the Christian faith. On the one hand, all culture is judged as an expression of man's sinful nature. Its value as an aid to understanding the gospel is rejected. On the other hand, man's culture is seen to comprise the whole of his existence, making it impossible for him to apprehend anything that cannot be communicated through historical and cultural media. What is new about this *either/or* dichotomy is the sharpness with which it has been drawn in this century.

These interpretations of the relation of Christian faith to culture have their parallels among the preachers. Not only fundamentalists, sectarians and revivalists, but a new generation of preachers bound by theological convictions feel it their task merely to "declare the gospel" to the congregation and leave the task of interpreting it to the Holy Spirit. Believing that this unapologetic hurling of the gospel at the congregation merely invites irrelevance and obscurity, the culture-conscious preachers seek to interpret the relevance of the biblical faith in relation to social, political, economic, scientific and artistic analysis. While it might be argued that the latter method has its example and justification in God's entry into human history and revelation in Jesus Christ, this is another question. My own assumption is that any preaching of the gospel which would have relevance for us must begin with an appropriation of the human and religious situation of our time as it is reflected in the political revolutions, economic conflicts, sociological and psychological analyses and in the artistic expressions of our culture. However, it will be the purpose of this article to examine only the artistic expressions of our cultural situation and the value of these expressions for the task of preaching.

I

Social, economic and political events have a flesh-and-blood reality — a having happenedness — which does not properly belong to the theatre, the art gallery, the concert hall or the library. Hence, there is a sense in which the reality of the contemporary social and religious situation is given in these events and is not given to us in the works of the imagination — in drama, painting, music or the novel. At the same time, however, the controlled imagination of the artist selects from the world of events and meanings those events which appear most significant, most representative. And it imposes on these events and meanings an ordered perspective which cannot be found in the indiscriminatory events of our daily personal and social life. Hence, while we cannot dispense with the Huntley-Brinkley Report or the sociological analysis of Reisman and Whyte, the work of the artist may prove to be our most valuable key to interpreting the human and religious situation to which they point. The common factor in the aesthetic vision and in socio-political events is their particular, historical character. The artist, says Gordon Kaufman in his *Relativism, Knowledge and Faith,* does not seek to bring every part of reality into its proper place in some system as does the philosopher or theologian. Rather, he attempts merely to display those segments of life which command his attention in all their depth and uniqueness of meaning, without apology or compromise.

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The uncommon sensitivity demanded by the aesthetic vision, in the case of every great artist, turns him into one who does not simply reflect his culture — though he certainly does this — but, rather, into one whose exceptional awareness of the deep political, psychological and religious forces at work in our nature and history places him in advance of his age as one who speaks prophetically, both in the popular and in the religious sense. For this reason, the anticipatory vision of the artist makes him a significant force in the emergence of the history which he foresees — that is, if his work is not prematurely rejected by society as too avant-garde or as the work of a social misfit. To make the point here, one has but to recall such artists as Cervantes, Goethe, Dostoevski, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Cézanne and T. S. Eliot. Hence, to be aware of the work of the artist is not only to know more clearly and deeply the forces at work in our present life; it is also to know something of the direction in which the personal and social spirit of the time is moving.

Not only will an awareness of the arts aid the preacher to greater understanding of the people and the society to which he preaches. The use of the arts in preaching will give the sermon greater relevance, interest and — dare we say it? — dramatic power. Too long, preachers have assumed that dramatic power is held in monopoly by the fundamentalists or can serve only the interests of an individualistic revivalism. The success of the social drama of Shaw, Miller, Williams, Brecht, O'Casey, Rutenborn, the Andersons and the dramatic power of the social realism paintings of Ben Shahn and Henry Koerner should suffice to explode this "myth."

The artist of today knows that social as well as individual existence has its dramatic dimensions. He knows that human nature and history are essentially dramatic and the human mind most capable of comprehending the concrete. (Even the so-called "abstract artist" is concerned only with the *concrete expression* in lines, colors, and textures of his vision.) Hence, the preacher intent upon preaching a *whole* gospel may learn not only from the artist's perspectives and prophetic insight, he may also learn the use of dramatic power in communicating the gospel, which is good news both to the individual and to society. Halford Luccock has pointed to the need for greater dramatic power in preaching, saying

> that seminary courses fail more on the side of art than on the side of theological and biblical and sociological content. The seminaries give four fifths of their attention to training men to preach to one fifth of their audience, that is, the one fifth of the congregation which can follow an abstract train of reasoning. In most congregations, the estimate of one fifth is a gross overestimate. The theological and biblical loading, of course, must not be left undone. But to it should be added more attention to the power to carry truth to people through the development of imagination. It is a great mistake in aeronautics to build transport planes to carry a load greater than the wing power. The average student leaves the seminary with more load than wing power to carry it.[1]

The artists in our society are those who have spent a lifetime nurturing the imagination. They are the authorities on "wing power."

Thus far, I have pointed to the ordered perspective and prophetic insight of the great artists. I have noted their authority as teachers of the dramatic. Yet the puritanism of Protestant and the monasticism of Catholic churches have often caused clergymen to reject the works of the artist as "senseless" or "lewd." For example, the Protestant clergy in the South rejected William Faulkner's *Sanctuary* in 1931, and in 1956, the Roman Catholic Legion of Decency condemned Elia Kazan's filming of Tennessee Williams' *Baby Doll.* A knowledge of the history of the churches would show us how closely the condemnation of the subject matter of such works of art is related to the condemnation of the *people* portrayed there. At this point, the minister of the gospel would do well to remember the words of The Very Rev. James A. Pike, spoken from the pulpit of St. John the Divine Cathedral in New York City following the world premier of *Baby Doll* at the Victoria Theatre. Dean Pike said of *Baby Doll,* "The Church's job is not to condemn portrayals of real life; its job is to provide the answers for the problems which they raise." In another sermon he asked, "Is it a sin to view the kind of life Jesus Christ entered, the kind of life still prevalent today? More specifically, is it a sin to view such movies as *Baby Doll?*" Also of *Baby Doll* — and one might include Faulkner's *Sanctuary* and many other works of art — Malcolm Boyd said, "One is grateful for this kind of unabashedly honest picture of seamy life, in contrast with the sentimental, dishonest drivel so often given us which mirrors a kind of life no one can really identify anywhere in experience." In short, to condemn certain works of art *merely* because they are seamy is to divorce oneself from a valuable source of insight into the very life Christ came to redeem.

A second objection to many modern works of the artist has to do with the doubt and skepticism expressed in them. Perhaps it should be said that the preacher who cannot enter sympathetically into the doubt of contemporary man, who cannot appreciate the faith of contemporary artists (and churchmen) arrived at through skepticism — such a preacher cannot expect to communicate with a significant group of persons living in contemporary society. Indeed, one may wonder whether such a preacher can identify himself with the Christ of the cross or appropriate for his preaching the wisdom

[1] Halford E. Luccock, *In the Minister's Workshop* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1944), p. 117. Used by permission.

of Paul, Augustine, Pascal, Luther and other saints of the church.

II

Let us turn now in some detail to the question of making the gospel relevant through the use of art in the pulpit. What are the spiritual problems of our time, and how can the arts aid us in speaking about them?

The breakup of medieval ecclesiastical authority, the rise of bourgeois society and the development of scientific philosophy — all this has made for the much discussed secularization of modern cultural and religious life. Yet we who preach the gospel glibly utter our proclamations week after week, unaware of the extent to which the forces of secularization have cut into our life and that of our congregations. We seem to be unaware of the difficulty of trying to live religiously in an essentially secular age. Hence, we would do well to read (in addition to the philosophers, theologians and historians) the works of Dostoevski, Nietzsche, Hölderlin, Kafka, Beckett, Camus and Rilke for a deeper understanding of the spiritual forces at work in our time. Here we encounter the modern humanist, moralist and existentialist grappling with the questions of morality and sainthood in a world where God does not appear. By reading such men, we might come to understand why, today, theologians and a few artists (Eliot, Auden, Greene, Lawrence) have concerned themselves with themes of revelation and resurrection.

The contemporary arts abound with allusions to God, to his "death" or his hiddenness or his justice or his mercy. The question of the nature and justice of God is raised dramatically, indeed sensationally in Tennessee Williams' play (also a movie), *Suddenly Last Summer*. In the overarching symbolism of the play, Mrs. Venable tells how her son, Sebastian, witnessed a massacre of newly hatched sea turtles by dark birds of prey on the beaches of the Encantadas and of how he identified this spectacle with "the face of God." Mrs. Venable concludes, "He meant that God shows a savage face to people and shouts some fierce things at them, it's all we see or hear of Him. Isn't it all we ever really see and hear of Him, now? — Nobody seems to know why. . . ."[2] A less sensational treatment of his theme is Archibald MacLeish's *J. B.*, a modern dramatization of the story of Job. Here the question of theodicy is raised by Nickles (Satan) when he says, "If God is God He is not good, If God is good He is not God. . . ."[3]
Given these dramatic situations, a little rereading of Luther and Augustine and the questions of his own congregation, what preacher could not launch into a good sermon on the nature of God?

Psychologist Carl Jung has said that Western civilization cannot be understood apart from the Christ-image which has informed it. Those who have not been open to contemporary literature, drama and painting might be surprised at the extent to which the Christ-theme has informed these arts. Without a knowledge of the Christ, it is impossible adequately to understand such characters as Joe Christmas in Faulkner's *Light in August* or Benjy in *The Sound of the Fury,* Billy in Melville's *Billy Budd,* the old man in Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea,* Thomas Becket in T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and the priest in Graham Greene's *The Potting Shed.* Christ-images have dominated the painting of such artists as Georges Rouault, Robert Hodgell and Joachim Probst. The sentimental, unprophetic Christ which informs most of our preaching could learn much from these works of the artist. My point is illustrated by an incident recently recounted to me by Arthur Brandenburg, an incident involving an exhibit of Probst's paintings at Duke University last spring. Probst's semigrotesque portrayals of the Christ evoked indifference and indignation from many students and professors. Yet late one afternoon, Brandenburg saw one of the Negro clean-up women stop before one of Probst's towering portrayals of the crucifixion. For more than half an hour she stood silently before the painting, finally nodding her head and saying, "Yes, that's my Jesus."

If one wishes to understand the alienation and dehumanization which emerge in a predominantly Protestant society when the doctrine of the priesthood of believers has become a secularized "togetherness" and is finally lost, he has but to see *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, A Streetcar Named Desire, Long Day's Journey into Night, Waiting for Godot* or *No Exit.* Dramatic expressions of alienation may also be seen in Picasso's "Family of Saltimbanques," Eliot's *The Wasteland* (the typist in "The Fire Sermon"), Kafka's *Metamorphosis* or Camus' *The Stranger* (contrasted with a reading of Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment*), and Fellini's movie *La Strada.* Against such spiritual isolation, one understands Lucasta's almost religious sense of redemption, as it were, when she says in *The Confidential Clerk,* "Oh, that's so wonderful, to be accepted! No one has ever 'just accepted' me before."[4]

Now, a word of warning: If the preacher comes to the arts with his own preconceived notions or theological interpretation of what he thinks the arts are or ought to be saying, what he will come away with is not the artist's interpretation of the present human and religious situation, but his own. What the artist has to say about reality may not be identical with what the church has to say. But the integrity of the artist must not be violated. At the

[2] Tennessee Williams, *Suddenly Last Summer* (N.Y.: Signet Book, 1960), p. 20.
[3] Archibald MacLeish, *J. B.* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), p. 11.
[4] T. S. Eliot, *The Confidential Clerk* (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1954), p. 68.

same time, in making use of the arts in his preaching, the preacher must maintain his integrity as a minister of the gospel, judging what the artist says in terms of the Christian faith. Hence, the human and religious situation given in the aesthetic vision must finally be judged by the Christian revelation. But the preacher cannot ignore the artist, *no matter what his view of life.* Only a docetic Christianity can hold that that which is "in the world" and "of the world" is no concern of the church or the preacher of the gospel of "New Life."

Thomas Wolfe's autobiographical character, George Webber, writes of the artist's compulsion to create in *You Can't Go Home Again,* "there is no rest, once the worm gets in and feeds upon the heart. . . . After this happens a man becomes a prisoner; there are times when he almost breaks free, but there is one link in the chain that always holds . . . there is one tiny cell that still keeps working; even when he is asleep, one lamp that will not go out. . . ."[5] Until the preacher feels such commitment to the gospel, until he becomes its prisoner in much the same sense, it is not likely that he will put aside his books of "canned" illustrations and devote himself to the arduous but pleasurable task of reading the great contemporary novels and poems, seeing the best plays and movies, or going to the art galleries and concert halls when he has the opportunity. But until such a time, the preacher should not seem surprised that thousands of men and women are turning to the artist rather than the church in search of a gospel of meaningfullness in a dehumanizing and increasingly meaningless world. Now, Tennessee Williams has promised that his next play will have "an ending that's nontragic. The people at the end still have problems, but they have found each other, and maybe they can now solve their problems together." One waits, not without some skepticism, to see whether Williams' romanticism will permit him to see the alienation and reconciliation of his new characters at a depth which will have real religious significance for the Christian congregation.

Themes of judgment are implicit or explicit in almost every work of modern art as, for example, in Picasso's "Guernica," Hodgell's "Golgotha," Kafka's *The Trial,* Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country,* Rutenborn's *The Sign of Jonah,* Miller's *Death of a Salesman.* Arthur Miller has said of *Death of a Salesman,* "What the play does is to make the individual ask himself whether his rationalizations about himself are not leading him to an ultimate rendezvous with a dreadful reckoning." Our church life and our preaching today proceed as if there were no "ultimate rendezvous with a dreadful reckoning." In these and other works, the artist has extended the call which can bring the preacher back to his prophetic task. Perhaps a few preachers, making use of Kierkegaard's indirect method, will spring these works of the artist upon their congregations and ask, "Have we not been judged of God?"

The individualism of expression which pervades most modern works of art has not left us without illustration for our sermons on social ethics. Arthur Miller's *All My Sons,* Maxwell Anderson's *The Wingless Victory,* Robert Anderson's *Tea and Sympathy,* Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* and George Orwell's *1984* are but a few of the works from which the preacher may draw.

III

We have spoken of the "human and religious situation" reflected in the contemporary arts and have illustrated some of the basic themes for contemporary preaching. However, in an effort to do justice to the artist's work and avoid subjecting it to some preconceived theological interpretation, a specific interpretation of the relation of religion and the arts has been retained until now. But two points must here be made.

First, the task of the contemporary artist, except for a greater degree of privacy, is not unlike that of the contemporary preacher (or theologian). Today, both the artist and the preacher stand in a "boundary situation" where some sense of order and meaning must be wrested from the dark forces of personal isolation, mass anonymity and cultural meaninglessness. If the artist's work seems not to stand too far from the edge of chaos, or if the young preacher's (or theologian's) religious interpretations seem to lack the wisdom which should be his with a knowledge of general and church history, the fault lies in part with the difficulty of their task and the times.

Second, Paul Tillich and Nathan Scott, among others, have reminded us often in recent years that every cultural expression is at bottom an expression of the human spirit and, therefore, of religious significance. If what is expressed by the artist — doubt, guilt, alienation, judgment, grace, reconciliation — is of ultimate importance for our being *men,* then his art is religious art, whether the subject matter is traditionally religious or not.

Witnesses

The centuries, since Christ to earthland came
Have been aflame
With his fair fame.
The nations that have fallen in decay
In sad tones say,
'His is the way.'
And in this age of turpitude and blight,
Out from the night
Shines clear his Light.

THOMAS CURTIS CLARK

[5] Thomas Wolfe in *You Can't Go Home Again* (New York: Harper, 1940). Used by permission.

Is Your Bible Open?

By John R. Bodo

II Kings 22:1; 23:3. Luke 24:13-27.

JUST a few years ago there was a great deal of interest aroused by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Recently a fresh wave of interest arose, stimulated by the discovery of the so-called Gospel of Thomas. As important as these discoveries are from the standpoint of biblical and historical scholarship, I cannot help wondering why we get so excited about materials which may, at best, add to our knowledge of the Bible, when most of us do not know — and have hardly bothered to get to know — the Bible itself. Why get so "worked up" about the mints and the nuts when we have not had our main course?

Josiah

The time of King Josiah was in some respects like our time. There was plenty of religion, but the Book — the Word of God — had been largely forgotten. The Jews were the people of the Book. The Law of God had been given to them through Moses. But during generations of foreign overlordship, the Law had become hopelessly mixed up with other religions. The cults of the ever-present Samaritans and of the Assyrian conquerors had so infiltrated the Hebrew religion that it seemed to bear little resemblance to the original.

At the same time, popular religion — this amalgam of God's Word through Moses with the idolatries of Samaria and Assyria — was immensely popular. There was a church building boom which might be compared with the one we are experiencing. There was also the same impatience with the past; the same uncritical grasping for religious cure-alls; the same contempt for theology because of its demand for thinking, which has always been anathema to the advocates and adherents of popular religion.

Religion at the beginning of the reign of Josiah neither possessed nor demanded moral fibre; hence it could offer no resistance to the erosion of the traditional Hebrew morality summed up in the Ten Commandments. The immoralities which went on under the aegis of this religion have no direct counterpart in our time. On the other hand, whenever religion is powerless to oppose immorality — not only in sexual mores but anywhere in the body politic — we have reason either to write it off as obsolescent or to pray God to send judgment, beginning with "the House of the Lord." For there may be a great deal of religion in the land. There may even be Bibles — lying around or even selling by the tens of thousands. But if the Word of God is not known — if it is not "heard, read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested" by people in all stations of life, if it does not profoundly affect and clearly mold the common life — *something is wrong.*

And something *is* wrong among us with respect to the Bible. It is not any scarcity of Bibles: far from it! Nor is it the problem of language any more. The Bible can now be read in simple, contemporary English. The Revised Standard Version is not only an extraordinary scholarly accomplishment: it is also a conclusive commercial success. Still, anyone who has ever given a test or a quiz to a group of normal, otherwise well-schooled Protestants knows that there is ignorance — factual ignorance, ignorance of what is in the Bible — which is almost beyond belief.

But there is a more dangerous ignorance, too. It concerns not what is in the Bible but how it is to be interpreted. Some of the people who know most about what is in the Bible commit the grossest offences against the Bible by reading into God's Word what they want God to say rather than letting God speak to them. Thus the Bible is used in wartime to build morale — to improve men's capacity to fight and to kill. Thus the Parable of the Talents is quoted — out of context — to prove that Jesus believed in capitalism. Thus the story of the earliest Christians who "had all things in

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common" (Acts 2:44) is quoted — out of context to show that Christianity is hospitable to communism. Thus the segregationist trots out the tired old mare (or is it a nightmare?) about the curse on Noah's youngest brat. Thus the prohibitionist does a *tour de force* to show that what John really meant to say was that Jesus changed wine into water. And so it goes. Shakespeare summed it all up when he wrote: "The Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose." (*Merchant of Venice.*) Yes, we have the Bible — the *open Bible.* But if we go to the Bible with a *closed mind* for proof-texts, we insult God's Word and turn God's light into darkness!

Hilkiah

Josiah was worried. He wanted to lead his people out of the moral darkness of their hodge-podge religion into the light which they had received from God through Moses. He turned to the temple — the historic symbol of Judaism — and started a renovation program, in the hope that renewed attention to the temple might offset the popularity of the pagan idols. The temple project had been under way for some time when something extraordinary happened. Josiah had sent Shaphan, the royal scribe, to instruct Hilkiah, the chief priest, about paying the workers, when Hilkiah confided in Shaphan: "I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord." The rest of the story we can read for ourselves: How the Law of God was rediscovered. How, as a result, a second edition of Moses' Law, which forms part of what we call Deuteronomy, was prepared. How Josiah called the people together renewed the old covenant with God, ordered the abolition of all idolatrous practices, made the temple at Jerusalem once again the exclusive center of Jewish worship, and thus assured instruction in God's Word for all the people. To be sure, this great moral and religious reform did not last very long. Still, while it lasted, it clearly bore the stamp of divine approval. And it all began with the finding of the Book!

But the baffling — and suggestive — question is: what was Hilkiah's part in the proceedings? What were the circumstances of the rediscovery of the Word of God? Where did Hilkiah — the representative churchman — fit into the picture?

One possibility is that Hilkiah really did not know the Book was there, buried in some obscure part of the temple, perhaps literally buried under some pile of mortar and stone. If this was the case, it would be a symbol of what has so often happened in the history of the Christian church. For the Bible often was buried so deeply under the ceremonial and institutional paraphernalia of the church, even the clergy did not know where it was. Nor did they miss it. Having identified Christianity with the ritual and the hierarchy, they believed sincerely that this was Christianity!

Another possibility is that Hilkiah knew very well where the Book was but deliberately withheld it from the king — and from the public. God's Word has a message which is seldom welcome. That is why we pick and choose, taking out what we like, ignoring what we do not like, preferring an assortment of spiritual candy to a firsthand exposure to God's Word in its fullness. Thus Hilkiah might well know about the Book and still be afraid to reveal his knowledge. Read the message of doom in Deuteronomy 28 and you will see how it might have offended the king! And when kings are offended by God's Word, a prophet's head is likely to roll! But Hilkiah was no prophet. He was a priest. He was afraid to rock the boat — and the temple — until something compelled him.

Huldah

Thus God's Word, long out of sight, found its way back into circulation. But not at once. For Josiah there was more. When he "heard the words of the book of the law, he rent his clothes" because the Book showed him the distance which he and his people had strayed from God. Josiah was ready to act upon the insight God was giving him but he wanted to be sure. A beginner in his knowledge of God's Word, he wanted expert guidance. "Go," he commanded his loyal scribe, Shaphan, "inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, . . ." For Josiah needed help with the interpretation of God's Word — and so do we.

For it is not true that we have never tried to plunge into the Bible. Many of us have tried — sincerely, questingly — only to come to grief for want of an interpreter. The biblical world is a strange and wonderful world, utterly different from our world. The prophets and the apostles spoke to people whose customs differed so much from ours that we must study them thoroughly if we would know what they really meant. Such a study of the Bible cannot be undertaken with the Bible alone, even with the Revised Standard Version or any other modern translation. This may be humiliating, annoying, or discouraging, but there is no shortcut to getting to know the Bible. We need help — the help of people, the help of books — to teach us to distinguish between God's message and the envelope in which it is wrapped; between prose and poetry; between factual, earth-bound truth and truth which transcends our small world.

So Josiah sent his little embassy to Huldah, the prophetess. Huldah's interpretation, frankly, is confusing. It seems that an earlier and a later version have been put side by side by some ancient editor so that Huldah's statement is really in two parts: one completely pessimistic, the other mildly optimistic. In one she says that Josiah's repentance for his people is "too little and too late"; in the

other she promises Josiah, on God's behalf, long life and a peaceful death because of his timely repentance. But whether Huldah was able to see into the future or made a mistake hardly matters. Prophecy is not forecasting, anyway. It is preaching. It is interpreting God's Word for our time, whenever "our time" may be. The important thing is not how good a prophet Huldah was, but the fact that Josiah turned to a prophet for a deeper, fuller understanding of God's Word.

In fact, it would be rather comforting to know that Huldah did make a mistake. It is not necessary to be infallible at the service of God's Word, as long as we endeavor honestly and with all the equipment at our disposal, fully to penetrate and fearlessly to interpret the Word of God. We may make mistakes, to be sure: God will forgive us and bring his order to prevail over our confusion. The only mistake we dare not make is to assume that our interpretation is final: that we have the corner on God's truth; that we have the "party line" to which the questions and the answers of all others must be made to conform.

In his delightful book, *Right and Wrong Ways to Use the Bible,** J. Carter Swaim tells about a visit to Hampton Court near London. It was at this royal residence that the King James translation of the Bible was made. In the garden at Hampton Court there is a famous maze — a network of paths so intricately laid out that visitors are sure to get lost. For one penny you are admitted through a turnstile and then the fun is on. The garden is lovely, the sights along the way are breathtaking, but the maze is bound to get the best of you. The only thing you can do if you want to get out is to look up. Then — not from every point but from a sufficient number of points — you can see His Majesty's Guard on a platform high enough to command a full view of the scene. Taking your bearings from him; you can find your way out. . . .

In the last chapter of Luke's Gospel, two unknown followers of Jesus are trudging toward Emmaus, weary and dejected. They had read the prophets and based their life's hope on their message. They had watched the fulfillment of prophecy in Jesus. They had seen him die, and once more they had fallen prey to an aching, unthinking despair. Then the Stranger joined them on the road. He heard them out. His heart went out to them. "And he said to them, 'O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things to enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things *concerning himself.*"

The Bible may seem like a maze. It is work — hard work — to find our way through it. But if we take our bearings from Christ, God's Living Word will open for us the strange and wonderful world of God's Written Word.

* J. Carter Swaim, *Right and Wrong Ways to Use the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953). Used by permission.

Thoughts on Preaching

✚ IN *Sesame and Lilies,* Ruskin writes that we are tempted to "worship the Letter of God's word instead of its Spirit (just as other idolaters worship His picture instead of His presence), . . ."

I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,
To stir men's blood: I only speak right on;
Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor, poor dumb mouths,
And bid them speak for me . . . — Antony in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar.* Replace the word "Caesar's" with the word "Christ's" and you have the Christian minister's profession of purpose.

✚ OCCASIONALLY forget the rigid preliminary outline and write your sermon as a spider spins her web. Throw into the air a thin strand of thought, and another and another until at last one catches and holds. This strand, from hedge to fence, will suggest where the next should go. Purpose will determine design and in the end, if the Holy Spirit has led, there will be an adequate and somewhat symmetrical web in which to catch the minds and souls of men.

✚ A PREACHER should have the skill to teach the unlearned simply, roundly and plainly; for teaching is of more importance than exhorting. — *Luther*

✚ DURING the war an archbishop was seen in a front-line trench in gaiters and a tin hat. Canon Guy Rogers has remarked on the encouragement that could be derived from his Grace's appearance since while his legs were firmly rooted in the past, his head was moving with the times. — *H. R. L. Sheppard** [Are *you* properly attired?]

* From *The Impatience of a Parson,* Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., New York, 1928. Used by permission.

Standing on the Promises

By Browne Barr

My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. Ps. 62:5.

THE PREACHER is on his feet, the text has been read and already someone has looked at his watch, crossed his arms, and settled back — settled back to wait. This morning I wish to speak to that person, for here in church he is doing what he must always do — wait! He is doing what everyone of us must forever do, day in and day out, so long as there is breath within us — wait! We may only be aware of it when we are bored, or when we are anxious, but aware or not, this is one constant factor of all human experience. We are forever waiting. It makes some difference then how we wait. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him."

First, let us note this: that waiting will be, as they say, the death of us yet, if it is not infused with expectancy, with hope. A hillbilly singer has recorded an old ballad which moans out the monotony of life. "The sun comes up and the sun goes down; the hands on the clock keep going around. I just get up and it's time to lie down. Life gits tedious, don't it?" We smile, but perhaps it is a smile to cover our deeper sense of tragedy. Without expectancy our waiting is dying. Life gets tedious, I should say! "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, Creeps in this petty pace from day to day." Without expectancy, we no longer wait. We turn our faces to the wall and die.

What a difference you sense when you encounter someone like Libby Fisher who taught school for 55 years in the Connecticut Valley and was retired without pension and without health. Had she not seen the little monsters come and go for 55 years, day after day, as the hands on the clock kept going around, the same tricks, the same old problems. Yet life was never stale for Libby Fisher, never tedious. Someone once said of her that she always looked as though something wonderful were just ready to happen and she had private advance notice of it. Well, wonderful things were always happening to her. She invited them, and expected them, and they came in magnificent procession. So mark this first: waiting, if it is not to "be the death of us yet," is sustained by expectancy, by hope.

Come now one step further and see how crucial the nature of our expectation is, for it determines the whole manner of our waiting. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." It is our expectation, you see, that rules our life, our waiting. We see this in the most ordinary experience. If we expect to travel by train, we do not go to the airport, and in New England if we expect to be on time, we do not travel by train. What we expect dominates all our waiting, all our living. This is no trivial matter, but one so deeply rooted in us that no action, no decision, no day's work is separated from it. This prompts the basic religious question: What is the end, the purpose, the completion of life? What may we expect?

I have made bold to bring you this question today because this is the Advent season and the mood of Advent is unmistakably this mood of waiting and expectancy. Turn to the usual Advent songs and themes. Is there not a hush about them, an air around them like that of the old man Simeon who was *waiting* for the consolation of Israel? "Watchman, tell us of the night, What its signs of promise are . . ." How gentle and lovely it would be to move on now and say something about this Advent expectancy in terms of the manger and the child and simple piety, of angels and stars and domestic virtue. How gentle and lovely to place the baby in our midst and drop a halo around our own little ones and urge us all to place our expectation there in the little child. Gentle and lovely it would be — but weak as water! And once again the tradition and wisdom of the church save us from our own superficiality. For, surprising as it may be, traditionally the four Sundays in Advent have been given over to a course of four sermons

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BROWNE BARR, *professor of homiletics at Yale University for seven years, began a new ministry at the First Congregational Church, Berkeley, California on September 1. A graduate of Grinnell College and Yale Divinity School, Mr. Barr served Congregational churches in Manchester, Middletown and Waterbury, Connecticut before joining the Yale faculty in 1953. While still at Yale, Mr. Barr preached this Advent sermon to a university congregation at Battell Chapel.*

not on birth, childhood, domesticity and White Gift Sunday, but on death, judgment, heaven, hell! The prescribed lessons for Advent properly preserved in many liturgies are not primarily from the early pages of the New Testament but the later pages; the Palm Sunday procession and the eschatological passages which deal with the "last" things; the end of history, the final purposes of God; not Christ's nativity, but his crucifixion; not his birth, but his eternal victory! Christian hope is not in a manger, but in a cross; Christian expectation to inform all our waiting is not in a child, but in a risen and reigning Lord. We must see that clearly to understand the nativity at all.

Have you not sometime received a gift you could not make out? What on earth is this thing? you wondered. You turned it every which way and shook it and puzzled about it with your friends. Until you learned its true purpose, its end, it was only useless or misused in your hands. So with the Gift of Bethlehem, useless or misused it remains until the end, the intent, of that gift is discovered. For a waiting world a useless gift we have at Christmas if the wise men's star outshines the resurrection dawn.

If we are taking our waiting seriously — our living — it will "be the death of us yet," if we do not lay hold on a hope, an expectation about the last things — the great assize — a hope which is great enough to meet the measure of our days and give basic order in our perplexity. For this waiting is not all on a sunny day when even a pagan could be hopeful, but in very dark days, too. Life is not an easy stroll in the park, or a pleasant picnic in the woods. It is waiting that is battle and warfare and grief. The expectation must be great enough to be heard through all the throbbing sorrow of a world torn from its healer's arms, and strong enough to pierce to the midst of its angry conflicts. It must bring confidence about the grand drama of history; what it means and on what it all converges. It must be pure enough to reach through to broken hearts in the midst of lives and civilizations laid waste. What is the expectation — the hope that will hold a man through all that and more? At once we want to say that hope is Christ. That it is Christ who is our expectation. That it is Christ who is our hope. But that sounds like the preacher's easy way out. The man waiting in darkness is not convinced, and so the preacher presses harder and says that what he means is that in Christ we learn that God is love. God is love, God is love. *That* is our hope. *That* is our expectation. *That* informs all our waiting and gives it sense.

Perhaps, but a doubt persists. Love seems pervasive to be sure and our deepest instinct speaks of its place in our hope, but looking only at the manger how do we know that love is not done *in itself at last.* "That God is love is a very great faith," we are reminded by P.T. Forsyth, "as things are. But we need more. Has this love all power in heaven and on earth? Is it final? Is it eternal? At the very last pinch is [God's] love perhaps helpless against the loveless power," a mother tugging at her soldier son as he turns away to the sergeant's command? So the last word is not love, but love with power; and so the last scene to which we must turn, and in which our expectation is planted, is not the nativity with its sweetness and possibility of defeat but the cross with its brutality and its final victory; not the birth of him who came, but the death of him who died and was not held in death's embrace. Again, you see, it is the last, the very last, which gives meaning to the first and between the two we wait — no, not wait, but march, and move and do battle. This is the hope to shape all our struggle, not that God is love but that the love which is God has ultimate and final power. This is God's *promise* in Christ. We are waiting then — standing, our fathers used to sing, standing on the *promises* of God.

Yet a doubt remains! An expectation is *only* an expectation, not a realization; a hope is *only* a hope, not a fulfillment; a promise is after all *only* a promise. Again I am reminded of a few words from the mournful ballad with which we began, tempted by them: "The mouse keeps chawing at the pantry door. He's been at it now for a month or more. When he gets there, he'll sure be sore — 'cause thar ain't a dern thing in there." So, is all our waiting directed only by an expectation; is all our living drawn only by a hope, a promise? What if that hope is after all an illusion; what if that which is promised does not come?

Now, alas, we are speaking, pleading, weeping, faithlessly, as the Advent season sometimes tempts us to do; as though we were the people for whom Christ is yet unborn, praying for the fulfillment of a hope already fulfilled; begging God for a Savior, when the Savior has already come. Vainly, blindly, presuming that our expectancy itself is our own creation and not his prompting. It is not his work that remains undone, but our appropriation of it. It is here that faith supplants hope, and experience supports them both. We are no longer a race walking in darkness, but a people who have seen a great light and our expectancy comes not from what God might someday do, if he chose, but from what he has already done. Our waiting finds its meaning not in our *hope,* but in our Master, not in a deed promised, but in a deed done. The promises by which we live are promises in eternity, to be sure, but eternity is not beyond time, as we often suppose "in the sense of coming after it," but eternity is beyond time only in the sense "of being deep within it" (A. Vidler). Time has already been conquered by eternity: and our text is no longer from the Old Testament but from the New, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have *overcome* the world."

The Charm of Christmas

By Ernest R. Case

OF ALL the seasons of the year there is none more fascinating than Christmas. There is a peculiar, almost paradoxical quality about our twentieth century observance of Christmas: we are at once wearied by it, yet rested; we are disturbed by it, yet delighted; we are critical of its commerce and crowds, yet captivated by its carols and color. Moreover, like the ancient wise men, we are willing to travel great distances until our hearts are at home; we are willing to overcome Herod-like obstacles for the satisfaction of presenting gifts to our loved ones; we are willing to be reverent and worship, even though we have been proud, callous, and sometimes anything but religious during the rest of the year. You see, there is an irresistible "something" about Christmas that attracts, captivates and fascinates us. That "something" is charm!

The Magi felt the charm of that first Christmas: "When they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." The shepherds felt the charm of that first Christmas: "And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen." Simeon, the aged Jew in the temple, felt the charm of that first Christmas, and he, beholding the Christ child, said: "Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace . . . for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And, of course, Mary felt the charm of that first Christmas: "She kept all these things pondering them in her heart."

As the charm of a person is not dependent upon race or nationality, clothing or make-up, but upon inward character, so the charm of this holy season is not dependent, in the last analysis, upon variations in local observances or temporal traditions, but upon the deep and abiding character of Christmas.

What is Christmas? Answer the question with integrity and imagination — then you will discover its charm! Having discovered its charm, you may want to cloak yourself in it not for a day, not for a year, but always!

I

What is Christmas? Christmas is essentially a song of creativeness! It began in the heart of God centuries ago — thousands of years before the star shone down on Bethlehem town. We find its overtones in these majestic words:

> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

Then the song of creativeness was taken up by man. Man sang it when he discovered the value of his opposing thumb with which he could pick up objects and hold them. Man sang it when he made the first stone hammer and hatchet, the first crude plow and wheel. Then, realizing that material ingenuity is not enough to create the ideal Eden, the song of creativeness was enlarged by man to take in spiritual significance. It was heard coming from the lips of Moses as he received the commandments on Sinai. It was heard coming from the lips of the writer of the book of Proverbs when he said, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." It was heard thundering from the lips of the prophets who saw that man was using his God-given power to destroy rather than to create.

The years passed. Man experienced banishment and bondage, flood and exile. His degenerate state was characterized by Isaiah, "Woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Suddenly out of his eternity God broke again into the realm of time. Angelic choruses sang a new song of creativeness: "Unto you is born a Saviour . . . Peace on earth, good will toward men."

Christmas is a song of creativeness. It began in the heart of God in the dawn of time and reached its "hallelujah chorus" in the birth of Jesus. His birth occurred in an unlikely place, at an unlikely

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ime in order that unlikely man might have life bundantly.

To hear a song of creativeness and then to sing t yourself is to capture the charm of Christmas. Tell me, do you try to express yourself creatively at nexpected times, in unexpected places, in the gifts you give, the cards you send, the work you lo — that others may enjoy life more abundantly? Then you have caught the charm of Christmas!

II

What is Christmas? Christmas is not only a song of creativeness, it is a story of selflessness. It had its beginning in the heart of God. "For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son."

See how the theme of self-forgetfulness and generosity runs through the narrative of the nativity. Joseph, perplexed and bewildered by events he could not grasp, unselfishly stood by as the protector and guide of Mary and the Holy Child. The Magi, at the cost of relatives and friends, ease and luxury, encountering all the obstacles of first century travel, journeyed by the light of the star to Bethlehem to present their gifts to Him who would be the light of the world. The shepherds, excited by strange tidings, hastened to see the child who would one day be the Great Shepherd — and in their haste they forgot their sheep grazing under the Syrian stars. The humble tradesman Joseph, the learned Oriental sages, the simple shepherds — these are enshrined in Christian history because they were the first to forget themselves as they honored, with their generosity, our Lord.

Christmas is a story of selflessness. It is not only the birth story, but the life story of Him who said:-

> He that would find his life must lose it.
> If any man would come after me let him deny himself . . .
> Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.
> It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Do you exchange gifts at Christmas? Or do you give them? There is a difference! Throughout the year do you keep the house and care for the children; do you go to work and plant the garden because you have to — or because you want to? There is a difference!

To read the story of selflessness — and then to live it yourself — is to capture the charm of Christmas!

III

What is Christmas? Christmas is a symbol of promise and a sign of hope — a portent of better things to come. For the pagan, Christmas speaks of seasonal change: "When winter comes, can spring be far behind?" For the non-Christian idealist, Christmas speaks in general terms of brotherhood and good will: "If such generosity prevails at this festival — why not always?" For the Christian, however, Christmas is a promise — the promise of relief from our sin and mortality. Dr. Fallon reminds us that the two things most dreaded by mankind are sin and death. Sin and its attendant feeling of guilt drives hordes of people to psychiatrists and mental institutions. Death drives us to the obituary column to see who among our loved ones has left us.

Christmas is the eternal symbol of better things to come through Christ. To Joseph the angel said, "And thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." To the shepherds the angel said, "Fear not, for unto you is born a Savior." And we might add, a Savior who not only saves from sin but from pagan feelings about death. Christ forgives sin! No matter how bad I've been — he forgives if I'm penitent. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be washed whiter than snow." Christ overcomes death! Beyond this life, there is another. "Where I am there ye shall be also."

Is it any wonder that the angel said, "Fear not!" Is it any wonder Phillips Brooks prayed:

> O Holy Child of Bethlehem;
> Descend to us we pray;
> Cast out our sin, and enter in,
> Be born in us today.

To see in Christmas the symbol of promise and the sign of hope that casts out fear is to capture the charm of Christmas!

IV

What is Christmas? It is a song of creativeness. It is a story of selflessness. It is a symbol of hope!

A beggar sat daily in a street directly across from the studio of an artist. The artist painted the beggar's portrait and then one day called the beggar in to see it. The beggar didn't recognize himself at first.

"Who is it?" he kept asking.

As recognition dawned, he said dubiously, "Is it me? Can it be me?"

"Well, that's the man as I see him," replied the artist with a smile.

Then the beggar with an act of faith responded magnificently, "If that's the man you see, that's the man I'll be."

Herein is a parable. God is the artist. Mankind is the beggar. Christ is God's portrait of the ideal person — creative, selfless, and filled with the promise of eternal life.

To observe Christmas is to see this portrait of Christ in all of its beauty, and to breathe a silent prayer, "If that's the man you see, that's the man I'll strive to be." To do this is to capture in all its fullness the charm of Christmas!

Voices of a World in Revolution

A Choral Poem

By Phillip N. Linsell

NARRATOR: In the first days, God gave man a mind
with which to think.
Man He also gave a will with which to
decide.
With these two man contrived with Greed
And created for himself a force called
Power.

From this inclusion dates man's struggle.
From this inclusion dates man's suffering.

So soon as man had the right to power,
So soon did he contrive for himself
The right to suffer:
To have one man over another
Is to have one man beneath another;
It is then, only a matter of time
Until the equality in which they were
both created
Becomes a part of the forgotten past
And the present emergency
Justifies all malefaction.

A powerful few rise to power
While a wise few watch in silent resigna-
tion
And a multitude cry from the wilderness
that
We
Call
World:

QUARTET: We are tired of waiting, of hoping;
We are tired of listening
To empty promises and foolish lies;
We no longer want to hear stories
Of love that breeds greed;
Of falsehood, hypocrisy and corruption.
We are tired of hearing
Voices muffled by power —
Power which stamps out Truth and Cre-
ativity
And calls it Love.

We are tired of hearing promises of peace
When there is no peace;
Of help when there is no help,
Of bread when there is no bread,
Of life, —
When there is only death
and destruction.

FIRST VOICE: We cry a new theme:
Give us revolution —
to erase suppression;
Give us power —
to make wrong right;
Give us strength —
to stand for what is good and just.

INQUISITOR: Yet, my brothers,
Is it not written
"Man shall not live by bread alone"?

QUARTET: This we know:
Man does live by bread.

INQUISITOR: Your cries for revolution
Make you sound like warmongers.
Has not there been enough blood shed?

FIRST VOICE: We once sought peace and harmony —
But men of greed
And nations of greater greed
Came to rule our lives
And steal our minds.
We too sought wisdom and truth
But instead we were given dogma and
decrees.
We sought creativity and beauty,
But instead we were given conformity
And production quotas.
We sought to love those who hated us
But they killed our children
And we cannot love those who would
Destroy us.

SECOND VOICE: Others promised us help.
Letters came
And words gave us hope.
But those who wrote
Wrote from homes safe and secure;
Those who spoke
Spoke of Ideal Lands and Ideal Places
But we live in Reality
With its hate and greed;

We live in Reality:
Everyday we are hungry;
We live in Reality:
Everyday we tire from toil.

FIRST AND SECOND VOICES: We hungered and they sent machinery;
We were lonely and they sent money;

PHILLIP N. LINSELL *left for Japan in late August, there to teach English in a mission school for a period of three years under the American sponsorship of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church. In Japan, Mr. Linsell will work with the Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan (United Church of Christ in Japan). A graduate of North Central College, Naperville, Illinois, with a B.A. in English, Mr. Linsell had completed two years of work at Evangelical Theological Seminary, Naperville, prior to his departure for Japan. This poem was presented in the seminary chapel as part of the activities in Senior Week.*

We were lost and they used us for their gain;
We were in need and they gave us sermons;
We wanted help and they sent promises.

THIRD AND FOURTH VOICES: Promises!
Promises!
We are tired of promises
Of friends in distant lands
Who send only words;
Of those who use our need
As a means to their power.
We are tired of striving for another's gain;
We are tired of hunger and insecurity.

FIRST AND SECOND VOICES: Give us blood!
Give us revolution!
Give us power!

THIRD VOICE: It is power alone that rules.
Power gives us the right to be free
To rule others;

Power gives us strength to
Oppress our oppressors;
Power gives us justice,
For justice, like mercy,
Is the prerogative of the strong.
Give us power and we shall make peace.
We shall slay the oppressor
And set up our own freedom.

INQUISITOR: Power
In your hands would be as bad
As it is in the hands of
Those who hold it now.

NARRATOR: Then what will you give them?

Will you give them new limbs
For shattered bodies?
Will you give them new years
For their ages lost in suppression?
What will you give them
For their youth lost in fighting?
What will you give them
For their dead loved ones?

What will you give them?

INQUISITOR: Why should I give them anything?
What do I owe to them?
I have done nothing wrong.
I have done nothing . . .

FOURTH VOICE: . . . You have done nothing!
Such is your judgment.
You have done nothing wrong,
But you have done nothing.

We are not so
For we must live
With our memories.
We are every day reminded
That our past is still with us.

We cannot forget. . . . .

SECOND VOICE: Our people huddled in mud-slung houses
And filth-filled ditches;
Our aching bodies wracked with pain
Yet fighting on for a freedom
Which others inherit by birth;
Our hopeless, mangled mouths gaping for food;
Our dying brothers crying for help;

FIRST VOICE: Our leaders selling our lives
As pawns on a checkerboard globe;
Our councils of war
Bargaining for the lives of countless millions;
Our finest youth, blood of our race,
Brains dashed upon the fruitless rock of greed;

THIRD VOICE: Ghost-faced parents praying in vain
For a son who lies in a cornfield;
Babes crying out for a mother's dried breast;
Stomach-bulging children who stare blankly
Into the face of death,
Knowing it only as life;
Weeping men sobbing blood tears
For a nation lost in
The world's search to become God;

FOURTH VOICE: These we cannot forget.
They ring in our lives,
Resound in our prayers,
Cry out in the night of apathy
And die on the drawing boards of
Dreaming do-gooders.

INQUISITOR: Such words come only from the mouths of fanatics:
Those who have continued to retain the zeal
But who have lost their aim.

We ought to be protected from such nonsense.
There are laws against such people.
Why are not these laws enforced?
What about my rights?
After all, I do know my rights!

NARRATOR: You may know them
But have you earned them?
Do you deserve them?
Do you safeguard them
Or do you let freedom rest on half-attention
And gullible acquiescence
To pretty-mouthed politicians?
You speak of freedom and rights.
How long do you think you shall be free?
How free shall you be while
Man is subject to the power of the mighty?

NARRATOR, QUARTET IN WHISPER: No land shall be free until
All lands are free.
No power shall last
So long as it is built upon
The weakness of others.
No people shall live for themselves
For they shall perish
Under the might of their own tyranny.

INQUISITOR: You misunderstand me.
I do not like fighting and bloodshed.
Can't we have peace and prosperity too?

QUARTET: But the peace you want this world does not give.
Peace is not the absence of striving.
Peace,
Lost to indifference, self-concern and greed
Must be won with love, reason, and judgment.
The wrong in our lands will not disappear
But rather must be bought
With innocent blood
By a higher law of love.

SECOND VOICE: Not until men see in man the fear of pain;
Not until man has learned
To care for his brothers
To the farthest reach of the world;
Not until love is more important than self;

QUARTET: Then shall the world find peace,
The peace which passes
Beyond our understanding.

PRAYER: Great, great is the need for love,
As great as the need for peace.

Amen.

THE MOURNERS BENCH

By G. Hobab Kish

AN intellectual is a fellow who thinks there is something more interesting to talk about than women. Let it be confessed sadly, Hobab is no intellectual and so a friend had little trouble recently in bringing the conversation around to the distaff side. However, we talked about a special kind of women, namely, preachers' wives.

Seems this friend is an executive big-shot who has to deal with the problems of about five hundred pastors. He had been trying to prevent a divorce and had failed. He was feeling mighty low. According to his experience, this sort of thing seems to be increasing. The cause? "Well," said this fellow, "too many wives are going to psychologists." This was so heretical that it shocked old Hobab and he felt that such subversive doctrine should be challenged. "Elucidate," I commanded and this is what my friend told me.

The ministry is a tough job and it puts more strain on preachers and their families than most professions. Today if anybody is not positively happy, he or she runs to a psychologist or to a psychiatrist, or to some kind of professional counselor. These brethren are usually well meaning and they are up to their ears in theories about personality frustrations and fulfillments. The only trouble is, my friend claims, they do not know any more about the ministry than a rabbit.

So, they tell the wife that she needs to fulfill her own personality and be a person in her own right. They always conclude, my friend says, that the strain is caused by the wife being submerged by her husband's status. He gets all the notice and he holds all the prominent places. The gals feel that they are only "preachers' wives" and they are but shadows of reality. I tell you, it makes your heart bleed.

Now what is the solution? Why, the wives must have a career of their own. They must get somebody to look after the kids and start teaching school. Or they must get a job in a bookstore or take up interior decorating. One wife, (so help me, this is what he told me) was advised to take up smoking to release her tensions. The trouble is that a preacher's wife has a certain position in the church to maintain. When she withdraws from the ministry, she ruins her husband.

Now there may have been a time when churches were unreasonable in their demands on ministerial wives. But today few churches object to a woman being herself. She is no longer thought of as an unpaid member of the staff. She is seldom asked to do chores no one else will do. She is a person and the ministry is a family affair. One of the main strengths of protestantism is the family in the parsonage.

At this stage of the discussion, my friend became bitter. He said that there are too many of the psychological brethren who act as if persons can live in isolation. He said there are too many experts who think people can be healed apart from their social relationships. He said it was about time we recognize that if these counselors can do much good, they can also do much harm.

I have been pondering this and have arrived at four conclusions which are announced with great humility. *First,* to be a preacher's wife is a career without peer. *Second,* if a girl wants a separate career of her own, she ought not to marry a preacher. *Third,* every preacher and most laymen know that a man's ministry is shaped for good or ill by his wife. *Finally,* when the time comes when a preacher and his wife need help in their relationships, let them consult one who not only knows something about the human heart, but also something about the Protestant church.

'Bethlehem Spectacular'

By Richard E. Wentz

Then God said, "The Time is come, the Time is now
Indeed, there is no other Time.
Let us go to man and offer ourselves;
Let us be what we are *and* what man is meant to be —
AT ONCE — Very God and Very Man!
Now is the Time of rescue and of light
The Time when stars must be blackened by clouds
In order to shine more brightly.
Let us go even now to dip into the heart of man,
To ease the hurt and mend the Sin.
The worship of the 'I' must Fall
In writhing death, in clash of worlds, and shock of soul.
The Universe of things must meet
The Universe of man and man.
Let us be Born;
Let us go even now to Bethlehem."

From countless depths there came reply,
"O Lord, how excellent! how fine!
That you should come to *us.*
Bethlehem shall give you proper claim.
The life of man shall greet you as befits your crown.
First — spot announcements on Station WBET.
Oh, subtle! — to be sure — and of the highest taste!
Clever! — Clever! — Clever! Leave it to us!
The world will know in undetected ways.
Chipmunks and reindeer will sing
The songs of this great day.
Abraham and Jacob's Department Store
Shall glisten and sparkle on Avenue Salem.
Their wares shall shout your Day
For weeks ahead.
Gold and silk — silver and furs
And frilly frills of lace and rayon;
Maybe even acetate and nylon.
Plastics, ribbons, lights, and blurbs,
Champagne, perfume, spice and herbs;
Music, gaiety, LP discs, and noise;
Ah, what magnificent, glorious build-up!
The streets we'll gild and trim and brighten
Especially where the sights are drab, the people shabby.
BORN! you say — a *real* birth?
That is full of human interest!
Color scenes of home and family!
The magazines can carry 'shots' of the Expectant Mother
And perhaps just a touch of glamor to the girl.
The father a carpenter? Well, we'll arrange a change!
A man of such import could be 'consultant'
To the architects' firm of Wright & Wright.
For weeks ahead we'll give direct TV report
To stir the public interest.

Follow eyewitnesses to the presidential suite
Of the Bethlehem Hilton
Where finest obstetricians and dutiful nurses
Will provide the most majestic care.
The office staffs of Trans Eastern Airlines,
Of Ishmael & Abimelech, of Nazareth Imports, Ltd.,
Will toast the day in festive mode.
Tickertape and limousine
Shall manifest the grandeur
And men shall give You thanks.
They shall honor You, worship You, O Lord!
The bands will play, the people shout,
And thousands march
With Hebrew Legion Drum and Bugle Corps.
The ultimate of ultimates — the piece d'occasion
The Sinai Summit of all shall be
An IBC Video Color Spectacular
Of songs and dances,
With Elvis ben Canaan and Pat boone David;
Climaxed — capped — and exalted
By a visit to the Grand Ballroom
Of the Bethlehem Hilton with dancing for all
And testimonies by mayors and chieftains,
Robbers and kings, presidents, governors
And all of those things!
The Royal Couple — wined and dined,
Honored and sped.
A Merry Christmas we'll call it! A Spectacle of Thanks!
A Spectacle for God! Spectacle in Bethlehem! Bethlehem Spectacular!"

THEN GOD SAID, "Bethlehem! Bethlehem! How, oh, how long
Will you persist in justifying the power of power?
How long will you worship the big and the bright?
Why must you say, 'This is the way it should be'?
Your way is your sin — your spectacle *your* righteousness.
But I am gentle and lowly in heart.
I shall put down the mighty from their thrones
And exalt those of low degree.
Unto you shall be born secret chambers
Of the humblest sort
A Savior, the Lord your God.
Seek Him while He may be found.
Spread a simple table;
For He comes in bread and wine
And the cries of the despised and rejected.
No ballroom of honor and esteem;
Only the recovery room of an unnoticed stable.
SPECTACULAR, Yes! God's own Spectacle —
In God's own Time! In God's own design!
Bethlehem Spectacular!"

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How to Win and Tame Beatniks

By Douglas Davis

GUEST: You certainly do have a nice place here. Large lawn, lots of trees, white house with green shutters — quiet, quaint little town. I mean, if you really dig that sort of thing.

YOU: Man, it's far.

GUEST: (*swinging his beard around flush into you*) What?

YOU: Man, I mean it's the peace. Nothing like the big pad, all that shoving and shouting. Out here, you don't have the strain — follow? No daily jazz sessions to dress down for, no cold-water flats to fight over, none of that pressure to keep making up poems every day.

GUEST: Say, Jack, you mean there's no reciting out here?

YOU: Right-O, Daddy-O. It's the peace, every day. And at night, you make love if you *want* to. Am I coming through? It's hard to communicate the beat of the thing.

GUEST: Try me.

YOU: Man, it's like no competition.

GUEST: I got you. I really hear that high note. But, man, where's your beard?

YOU: Who makes me? Besides, I love that after-shave. And that clean chin.

GUEST: I dig the way you wear same. Like it was a badge, I mean. But I don't see the children bit.

YOU: Comic books. I mean, the real thing.

GUEST: "The Shadow"? And all? Solid. How can I get out here? This is real Zen land.

YOU: No, man, no Zen. Christ. This is Christ land.

GUEST: Christ? Who's that?

YOU: They got a place that tells you. Just down the road. Singing every Sunday. But you got to be peaceful, man, peaceful.

GUEST: That's me, man, all kinds peaceful. Sounds just like Zen. This is the solidest out here I've ever seen. Didn't you blow with Bird?

YOU: I might have, until I went peaceful, like. —

Reprinted by permission from the Phoenix Nest, *Saturday Review*, July 16, 1960.

A Pastoral Prayer

ALMIGHTY GOD, who hath made all things good and perfect, humbly we acknowledge the infinite majesty of thy name. We praise thee for the delightful surprises that unfold in our lives. We are surprised by the unsuspected impulse for good that rises in our own breast. We are delighted that the dreaded obstacle in our path has vanished by our very confronting of it. We are happy for the unsuspected support of our friends. And we rejoice in the triumph of our companions over odds we thought insurmountable. May we by the surprises of thy grace overcome our disappointments.

The disappointment we have felt with ourselves is rooted, we discover, in our own inordinate desire to stand supreme. Foolishly we have believed that the events of life have hinged on our mastery of its impulses. We have trusted to our frail guttering lights and are disillusioned now that they are wind-blown and out. Grant that we may learn humility from our disappointment.

Forgive our disappointment in others. We have expected more of them than of ourselves. We declare our disappointment in love and we are only disillusioned. Our preconceived ideas of gratification are broken by love's demand of sacrifice. We should have known that we cannot collect persons to serve our own purpose, for we ourselves resent being used. May the disappointment we have felt in others teach us charity.

O Lord, forgive us our disappointment in thee. We have presumed by our integrity, our industry and zeal to put thee in our debt. And we are asking, "does righteousness pay?" We are expecting the just reward of which we are deserving. Can we fail to see that our expectations limit the gifts of grace? Our preconceived notions of thy will expect divine action according to our prescription. We have forgotten that thy thoughts are not our thoughts, thy ways are not our ways. Grant that we may learn faith from our disappointment, faith that enables us to exercise toward our companions a charity born of humility. In the name of him who thus lived, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. — *Alfred M. Deemer, Third United Presbyterian Church,* Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

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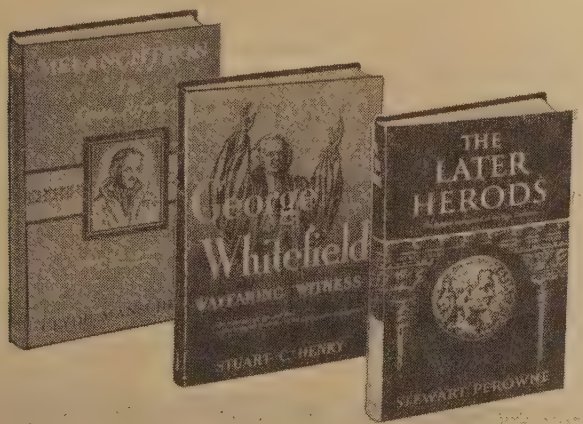

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Conversation at Midnight

By Claude U. Broach

A dialogue of anguish, wherein a man reasons with himself, writhing on dilemma's horns, seeking the comfort of sleep . . . having sought fruitlessly to prepare a sermon after reading that a company of Negro students who met to sing and pray were doused with fire hoses and tear gas . . .

I ask myself: Just to be blunt about it, what right has the church to call itself by Christ's name when it evades the moral imperative to open its doors to all who seek to worship him, without racial restriction? If we can't follow Jesus here, all that we do is farce, a gilded lampstand and no candle.

And I answer myself: You can't ignore *who* the church is when you start talking about *what* the church is. It is what it has always been — a fellowship of sinners who acknowledge that they are not perfect, who are seeking to grow in their understanding of the meaning of the profession they have made. You just can't expect perfection from a fellowship of sinners.

But how can I live with my conscience when I refrain from declaring the full moral imperative of the Christian gospel from my pulpit? Maybe I have said some bold things, and people have a pretty clear idea where I stand, but I have not really jeopardized my salary or my security. Others have been more bold, and some have lost their pulpits for it.

But the people to whom you speak have made progress in their understanding, and will make more if you will be faithful and patient. What good to an army is a general who gets so far up front that nobody hears him? And what can you say to people when you have stopped their ears? You are saying some things now they would not have listened to five years ago.

True, but there are many in this church who are willing and eager to take a long step ahead on this matter. They would welcome an opportunity to stand up and be counted. They are ready to say "This is a church which erects no barriers of race at its doors, and we welcome all who sincerely seek to know and worship Christ."

Yes. But there are others — some are saintly folk whom you've known, loved, and honored for a long time — who would oppose this with deep and sincere conviction. Press it and you'll split the church. And what right do you have to precipitate such an agony among brethren? Jesus said plainly, "Woe to him by whom divisions come." Maybe your own ego gets involved here, bemused by some hidden guilt complex which seeks expiation in martyrdom.

But I can't evade the haunting question: What would Jesus do? He would not condone segregated churches, and we would hear scathing words from his lips. Surely, then, we betray him when we perpetuate this hypocrisy, this cancer in his body. What would he do? My soul, what would he do!

Hold on; you're forgetting something. You're not Jesus Christ. You are only a man in the twentieth century, placed by God's call and grace in a place of opportunity and responsibility. You do have an obligation to be heard, but you also have an obligation to be helpful. If you go dashing off into martyrdom you forfeit your opportunity to be helpful. Do you think society will solve this problem all at once? You do more honor to your Master, and more service, ultimately, to his Kingdom, if you are content to lay some foundations on which others may build higher than you may ever hope to build in your own day.

So I am to use guile, to conceal my real objectives. I am to follow the way of expediency — is that what you propose? That is a coward's way; it is neither forthright nor honest. I cannot be at ease in my soul if I must conceal my sincere convictions.

Who promised you this "at ease" in your soul? This is no perfect world. You have to accept it as it is before you can make it better. There is a time to speak, a time to hold your tongue. Did not Jesus himself say, "My time is not yet"? And as for courage, it may require more to guard your speech than to sound off in egotistical display. You are not required to declare a lie, and there is plenty to say that requires courage even now. Remember that Jesus said, "I have many other things to say, but you are not ready to hear them." You wouldn't call him dishonest, would you?

I suppose you're right; I must be patient. But frustration eats at the soul like a cancer. I'd better try to get some sleep. There's the boy in jail I must see tomorrow, and Jim in the hospital — the gospel has a clear word for them, that's sure . . . wonder what's happening to those kids they turned the hoses and tear gas on. If I had any courage I'd hit that thing and hit it hard Sunday morning . . .

I thought you said you were going to sleep . . .

God, be merciful to me, a sinner . . .

Claude Upshaw Broach, *pastor of St. John's Baptist Church, Charlotte, North Carolina, is a graduate of the University of Georgia and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Active in church and community affairs, Dr. Broach is a charter member and first president of the Mecklenburg Baptist Inter-Racial Commission and of the Charlotte Family Life Council. He tells us that* Conversation at Midnight *was written originally to get some anguish out of his own mind, but he hopes its publication "may help a wider group of concerned people to know something of what goes on in a preacher's mind when he lives in the South at this juncture. The Negro has his cross, but the concerned brother who happens to be white knows something about the cross, too."*

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Book Reviews

QUIET STRENGTH FROM WORLD RELIGIONS. *By Quinter M. Lyon. Harper. $3.75.*

WATCHER ON THE HILLS: *A Study of Some Mystical Experiences of Ordinary People. By Raynor C. Johnson. Harper. $3.50.*

THE FIRST book consists of 200 meditations based on the scriptures of all faiths. The name of the work is well chosen, for the author dwells mostly on those passages which have to do with the quiet, reflective, meditative life. Each passage is followed by an explanatory sketch which is short and to the point. The meditation is then closed with a one or two sentence dedicatory prayer. The author has many good insights, and he keeps his identity as a Christian throughout the work. Of course, as a matter of personal preference, I would use many of these meditations as a supplement to and not as a substitute for meditations based on the Judaeo-Christian scriptures.

The other book is unique in at least three ways: it is written by a physicist, the author lays no claim to mystical experience, and he is concerned with the mystical experiences of ordinary people rather than with the so-called classical mystics. The work is well documented with case studies, illustrations, a table, and two diagrams. The diagrams may prove either helpful or confusing. The author explores "methods of expanding awareness" by the use of drugs and anaesthetics as well as by mental and physical techniques. I had difficulty understanding what he meant by "the Divine Society which men call God." After discussing this One-Many he says, "We are now in the realm of paradox if we attempt to say anything." That is exactly what I thought! As a nonmystic myself, let me say that Johnson shows an amazingly sympathetic treatment of mysticism. — *Benjamin L. Gaul, Methodist Church, Lohrville, Iowa.*

THE THOUGHT OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR. *By Gordon Harland. Oxford. $6.00.*

GORDON Harland has performed a valuable service in pulling together into orderly fashion the various facets of Niebuhr's thinking on the problem of applying to society the "agape" of the Gospel. From eighteen books and four journals he has culled the most pertinent material, reworded and summarized it with seemingly little distortion, and unified it in a book invaluable for our day.

Reinhold Niebuhr is rarely superficial, seldom parochial, sometimes heavy, usually penetrating, and invariably provocative. He prefers the prophet's camelskin to the theologian's mantle, but wears either easily. Painstakingly he delineates the margins of agape love. Among men it is purest between two, but complicates itself in conflicting loyalties with three or more. The only solution, then, is to strive for justice, or equality. Certain types of government encourage equality more than others so Niebuhr finds himself, in the second part of Harland's book, advocating the more democratic forms of government. Most of this dealing with particular areas is concentrated on politics, although war and peace, economics, and race each receive more than casual mention.

Over a period of almost forty years Niebuhr's thinking seems to have changed only in the direction of an increasing attempt to refine his initial presuppositions. Perhaps the most radical change is his shift from pacifism. Yet even here, Harland points out, Niebuhr always hemmed himself in with reservations — refusing to be a thoroughgoing pacifist.

According to Harland, it is Niebuhr's contention that liberalism bankrupted itself by disassociating God's justice from his love and thereby sentimentalizing the gospel. Fundamentalism, on the other hand, remained blandly sterile in its inflexible

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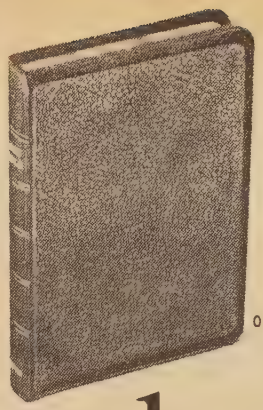

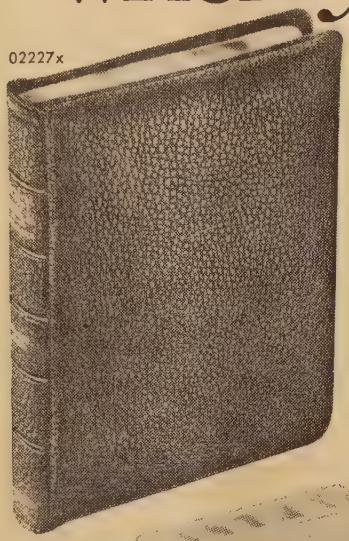

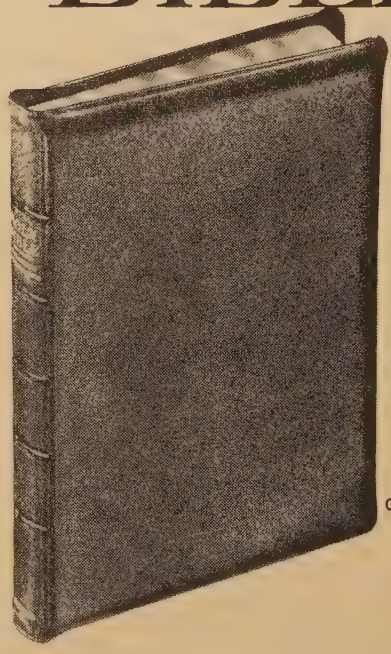

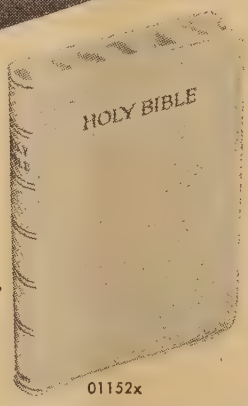

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literalism and irrelevant individualism. Only in emphasizing man's paradoxical freedom, permitting both the saintly and the diabolical, does the church face realistically the import of the gospel for our society. So Niebuhr hits hard on original sin, with its subsequent need of the doctrines of atonement, sanctification, and eschatology. Here he joins company with Barth and, to a lesser degree, with Brunner. From liberalism he borrows social concern, from orthodoxy he borrows basic theology, and in attempting to integrate the two he plows much new ground.

Recognizing the good in other positions helps Niebuhr maintain a balance that forbids, for the most part, parochialism. Nevertheless, he criticizes enough former plowing, and turns over enough new ground to raise eyebrows among most, and tempers among some. The liberal, for example, would contend that Niebuhr's hitting on original sin becomes harping, and harping leads to pessimism. The fundamentalist, on the other hand, would contend that Niebuhr has not at all clarified the relationship between individual and social religion.

Yet, it must be admitted, we are in far more danger of making the gospel irrelevant by our refusal, as a church, to apply it to the problems of collective society, than we are in distorting it by our insistent application and inevitable compromise. As Niebuhr said almost forty years ago, if we must have schism in the church, let it be at least honorable, resulting from our conscientious attempts to apply it to our multitude of problems, rather than from theological bandying.

The little that Harland's book suffers, as a compilation, from lumping together new concepts without the extenuation afforded by the originals, is more than made up by its systematic arrangement and concentration. — *Richard K. Curtis, Bethel College and Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.*

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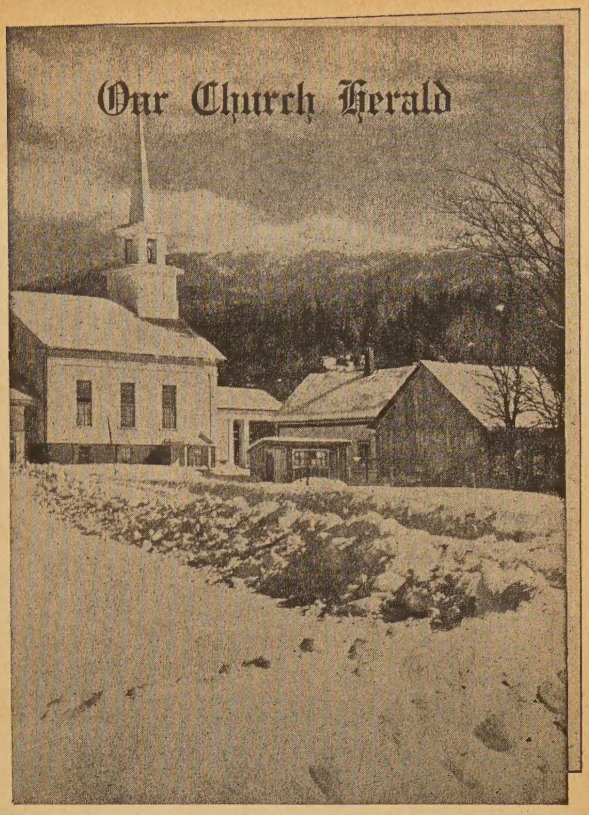

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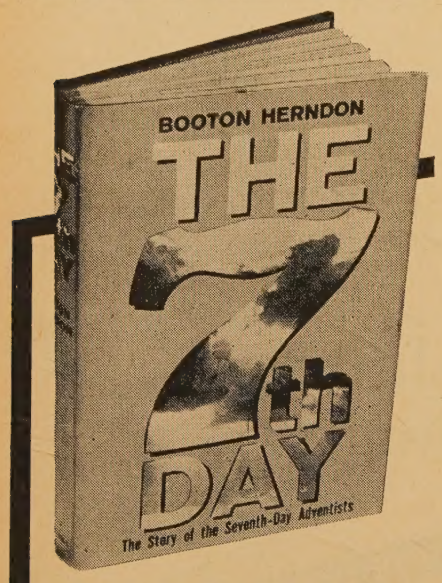

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received a well-defined corpus of belief and teaching and collected the greater part of a Christian literature to assure permanency for the church. Throughout, the letters present the religion of Christianity as a religion of facts, though the authors are not always able to explain these facts. "If a fact is a fact at all, it does not cease to be a fact because we cannot explain just how it came to be what it is."

In these letters we meet many of the characters which are well known to us from the book of "the Acts of the Apostles" — Silvanus (Silas), Cornelius, Peter, James, Paul, and others whose names are fictitious. We follow them as they obey the marching orders of the risen Lord Jesus to preach to every creature. We rejoice as more and more become Followers of the Way; and the Way becomes an organized movement. We appreciate the effect of Paul's letter upon the Corinthians and the influence of Peter's letter upon the Christians in Bithynia.

Gradually persecution arises, and this means death for many whom we have learned to love — James, Paul, Peter, Lucius, Flavia. But the church has taken root and continues.

The book has a few flaws. (1) It grants a possible way of salvation besides faith in Jesus who alone is the Way, and calls it a Larger Hope (page 109). There is no scriptural warrant for such a "hope." (2) First James is made ruler of the fledgling church, then Peter (pages 137, 141), whereas Jesus says, "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."

The book has its value nonetheless. — *Ronald W. Goetsch, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Amherst, Wis.*

THE CHRISTIAN MISSION TODAY. *Edited by the Joint Section of Education and Cultivation, Board of Missions of the Methodist Church. Abingdon. $3.00.*

AMERICAN Protestantism is in the midst of the "agonizing reappraisal" of missions. This is evident from the kind of studies being made under denominational leadership, from the new accents that appear in the interdenominational periodicals, and from the concerns expressed in local congregations, associations, and districts. This volume constitutes a solid example of the present inquiry of the meaning of the mission.

While the book is directed specifically to Methodist leaders in pulpit, pew, and committee, it has a message for anyone involved in the missionary enterprise anywhere. Here again theologians, secretaries, and teachers join in saying what has not yet become sufficiently understood, namely, that the church is a mission.

The Christian Mission Today seeks to probe the reasons for the mission, the history and the future of the mission. It apprises the reader of the resurgence of the non-Christian religions and of the ferment and tension that affect the mission today. It outlines the hope and promise of ecumenical Christianity. The 21 contributors speak what the reviewer believes the churches must hear. "Mission" is the reason for the church of Jesus Christ in the world. Witnessing to the gospel is the purpose of the church, led by the Holy Spirit. We have one mission, the writers agree, and this is to relate the promises of God to the life of all mankind. — *Melvin L. Frank, First Congregational Church, La Crosse, Wis.*

RELIGION THAT IS ETERNAL. *By G. Ray Jordan. Macmillan. $3.00.*

THE author uses an interesting approach to his subject in these lectures. After the chapter is completed he then lists a rather thought-provoking summary or recap of the subject, enabling the reader to pause and to rethink the chapter.

The content of the book is good but this reviewer did not find it as exciting as others by Dr. Jordan. However any person who is concerned about relating moral values to our modern world will be rewarded through careful study of these "guideposts to inner space." — *William O. Byrd, First Methodist Church, New Orleans, La.*

Pulpit Calendar

Dec. 4 — 2nd Sunday in Advent.
Dec. 11 — Universal Bible Sunday.
Dec. 18 — 4th Sunday in Advent.
Dec. 24 — Christmas Eve.
Dec. 25 — Christmas.
Dec. 31 — New Year's Eve.
Jan. 1 — New Year's Day.
Jan. 1-8 — Universal Week of Prayer.
Jan. 5 — Epiphany Eve.
Jan. 6 — Epiphany.
Jan. 8 — 1st Sunday after Epiphany.
Jan. 15 — Missionary Day.
Jan. 15-21 — Church & Economic Life Week.
Jan. 22 — 3rd Sunday after Epiphany.
Jan. 29 — 4th Sunday after Epiphany.
Jan. 29 – Feb. 5 — Youth Week.
Feb. 2— Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.
Feb. 5 — 5th Sunday after Epiphany.
Feb. 12 — Race Relations Sunday.
Feb. 15 — Ash Wednesday.
Feb. 17 — World Day of Prayer.
Feb. 19 — Universal Day of Prayer for Students.
Feb. 19-26 — Brotherhood Week.
Feb. 26 — 2nd Sunday in Lent.

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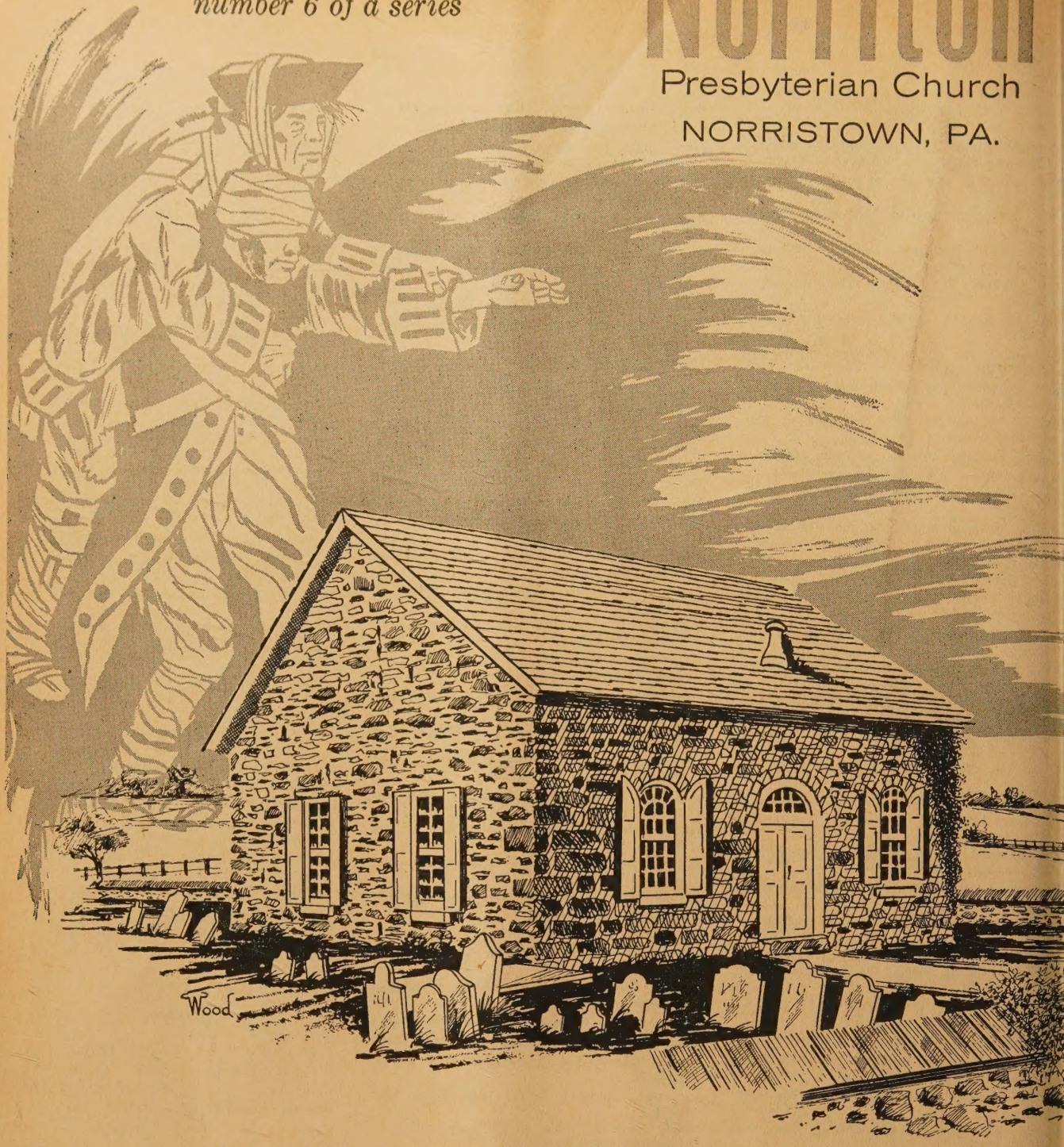

On the way to Valley Forge many of General Washington's cold, weary troops rested in this simple house of worship which was also used as an army hospital. Today the Norriton Presbyterian Church still stands in the peaceful Pennsylvania country side—the oldest Presbyterian Church in America, built in 1698. For an 11 x 14 framing print of this church, write to Ministers Life and ask for No. 6 of this series. Please send 25¢ to cover mailing costs.

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